TAFT TALK

No. 75 *Newsletter of the Taft Family Association* **Dec 2018**

Camp Harney on Lake Harney

Florida before DisneyWorld

This photo was taken on 17 Mar 1894 of Moses Taft (the bearded man in the center) and comrades hunting for meat for the new town of Miami. Their site was Camp Harney on Lake Harney, FL.

(see Moses Taft and Camp Harney p 3)

Thoughts from TTT headquarters

Norma Winters wrote recently. She was very pleased to receive the transcripts of two letters sent between Caleb Taft (1757) and his brother Jotham Taft, which we had in our files. She noted "I was especially pleased with the … letters because it always makes the long deceased person more real when one can read his own words as he wrote them so long ago." She also mentioned that she had received her copy of the "American Spirit Magazine" (a DAR publication) of March/April 2018 which contained an aticle on Lydia Taft, wife of Josiah Taft. Lydia was "reportedly the first woman to vote legally on American soil, and she did so in 1756, years before the United States of America even existed." Her deceased husband had been a very large landholder in Mendon. Her vote was in favor of the motion to increase the town's appropriations toward the war effort. Lydia also voted at least two other times. She is also mentioned on p. 9 of this issue. We wrote about Lydia Taft in TTT 42 (May 2002) p 11 when the Lydia Taft House in Mendon was named in her honor. In the current climate of election confusions and frustrations, it is heartwarming to have a family member as a shining example of how voting can reflect the goodness and inclusiveness of individuals and governments.

More from Norma Winters on p 4

Paul E. Curran

It has come to our attention that Paul E. Curran of Milford, MA has died.

Paul E. Curran, 85, of Milford, MA died 25 Jan 2015. He received his BA from Framingham State College and served in the Korean conflict as an army photographer. He worked for Bert Stern Photography Studio in New York City and later used those talents to chronicle the history of Milford. He was the author of the Milford Chronicles.

Although Paul was not a Taft family member, he was a notable presence in the Taft Family Association reunions and newsletters, especially in the 1990s and 2000s providing our family with histories and information both in word and photographs.

Keep on reading – you never know when you might find something helpful!!

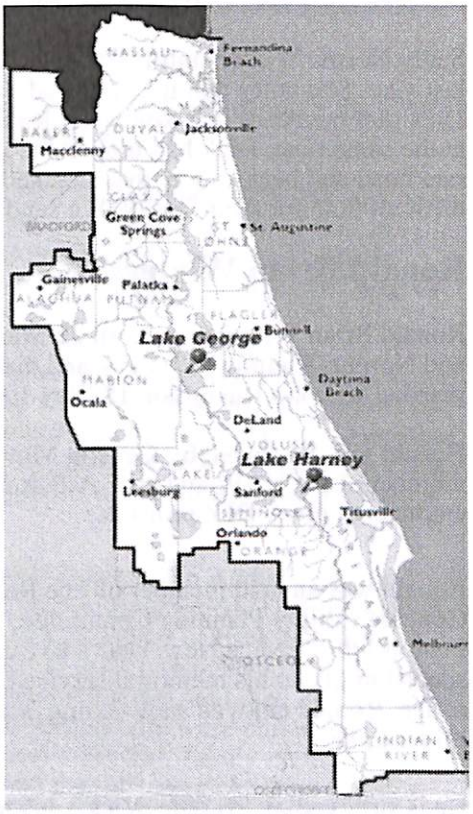
Shirley May Worrall Renaud (who has sent us some wonderful photos over the years) was thrilled to find information on Millens Aratus Taft, her gt-grandmother's brother, in a recent TTT. "Growing up I was quite involved about the family info because my mother was born in 1900 on the farm in East Blackstone and my Dad was born in 1884 and his Mom was a daughter of Mary Minerva, Millens Aratus' sister. Yes, my Mom and Dad were 1st half cousins. Mary Minerva's first marriage was to Mr. Turner and their daughter married Mr. Worrall. He, Turner, died and she married James Engley - their daughter was my grandmother. Millens Taft and Olive Comstock had a son Willis too. Anyway this is a find for me!"

We love when that happens!

Camp Harney or the Everglades at the turn of the century (19th to 20th, that is)

Your Editor had just finished reading "Killing Mr. Watson" by Peter Matthiessen when she came upon this photo (p. 1) sent to TFA in 1982 by Mary Linehan of Lantana, FL The novel was about the wild and crazy turn of the century in the Everglades – home to desperadoes and loners of all sorts, including the real-life figure of Edgar "Bloody" Watson. You could head out in your canoe and never be seen again, and it wasn't particularly alligators that were the problem. As for Mr. Watson, he had killed enough people himself that no one really cared who eliminated him, they were just relieved he was gone. The fishing camp of Camp Harney is quite civilized in contrast to southwestern Florida!

So where is Lake Harney?



Lake Harney straddles the county line between Volusia and Seminole Counties, FL, south of Daytona Beach. It is fed by the Saint Johns River and covers 9 sq miles, with a shore length of 12 miles and a maximum depth of 15 feet. The lake is home to largemouth bass, crappie, bluegill and redear sunfish which encourage bald eagles, osprey, ibis, herons, storks and many other fowl to populate the area. The Lake Harvey Wilderness Area is a popular 300 acre preserve at the outflow of the lake. It has several trails of more than two miles wandering through its diverse habitat.

The lake was named for Gen. William S. Harney who was a 2d Lt. in the first US Infantry in 1818 and served through the First Seminole War. After the Second Seminole War he served in both the Mexican-American War and the Civil War, retiring in 1863 as a General. He died in Orlando, FL and was buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

Sources: Wikipedia, Lakeharneywilderness

How did they get there?

Did Moses travel by horse and cart – did they travel by boat? Certainly not by boat from IA. What a journey that must have been – but then he was quite the adventurer.

Moses Taft and Camp Harney, FL

Moses Taft was born 9 Jan 1832 in Burrillville, RI, the son of Mary Mathewson and Willard Taft. He married (1) Joanna B. Gleason who died 5 Feb 1854 in Burrillville, RI. He married (2) Sarah Darling Baldwin 24 Oct 1860 in East. Greenwich, RI (VR 4-13) and divorced sometime between 1880 and 1900. He died 3 Aug 1901 in Sioux City, IA and she died 15 Feb 1928 in Blunt, SD.

Sarah Taft was a seamstress, midwife, teacher, cook, weaver and nurse. Moses Taft was a carpenter, cabinet maker and a builder and fixer of looms in the woolen mills of RI. He moved "west" shortly after 1865 after the death of his four year old son, David Baldwin Taft, who had been struck in a stage coach accident in RI which left Sarah, his mother, hunch-backed. Their daughter Mary was born in MI and the next child Lydia was born in NE in 1868 where he worked in a sawmill. The family settled on an 80 acre homestead in Correctionville, IA but were burned out by the Indians during the Spirit Lake Massacre. They found refuge back in Burrillville, RI. "Nine years later following a serious argument, Sarah went on to IA with the children. … Sarah [having] destroyed all she could find – and would have set aside the surname if possible." Apparently not exactly a settled 'family-man' Moses then became a river-boat guard on the river steamers from St.Louis, MO to Ft. Benton, MT, as well as a trapper, hunter and Indian fighter. He summered at Lake Harney in FL, hunting deer for meat marketing in the new town of Miami." (see photo p 1)

Moses Taft was the son of Willard (Moses, Nathan, Mijamin, Benjamin, Robert) Taft.

Mary Linehan sent the photos of Moses Taft at the camp. Mary was the chief historian and main chronicler of Lantana, FL having moved there with her parents when quite young. She was the daughter of Clarence J Collar and Arabelle Olive Chaffin, Roscoe Randolph Chaffin, Levi Hill Chaffin and Eliza Randolph, Daniel Randolph and Elizabeth "Betsey" Taft, Dan (Silas, Stephen, Benjamin, Robert) Taft.

Sources: Kathryn L. Taft, Findagrave, censuses, TTT

In Memoriam

Sadly Norma Winters informed us that her middle son, Ronald Winters, died last year. She notes that it "was a sad couple of years for the Winters family. Dick (her husband) and Ron were dealing with chemo-therapy and radiation at the same time. Dick had inoperable pancreatic cancer while Ron had some rare head and neck cancer that attacked his cerebellum (equilibrium). What a difficult time for their family. We send our deepest sympathies to the family.

Ronald Brian Winters

Ronald Brian Winters was born 22 Mar 1598 in Flint, MI, the son of Richard and Norma (Kleinow) Winters, and died 31 Aug 2017 in Fenton, MI. He married Victoria Russell on 18 May 1991 in Linden, MI.

Ronald was employed by General Motors for 40 years and was a proud member of the UAW and an E.A.P. representative. He and his father engineered many DIY projects.

Ronald was an avid member of The Recovery Committee and mentored many people of over the years. He served on the Genesee County Planning Committee, was a member of the 100 Club, Linden Masonic Lodge and a founder of the Fenton Jubil'-Eve, a New Year's Eve celebration. He was a tireless supporter of the Democratic Party and received special notice at his memorial service by Sen. Debbie Stabenow for his help in getting her elected to her first term in office. Ronald enjoyed snow skiing, scuba diving and being on the water as well as entertaining family and friends on Silver Lake.

He is survived by his wife, Vicky, his mother, Norma; brothers Rick (Dondi) Winters, Russ (Cindy) Winters; and many nieces and nephews by blood and by love. He was preceded in death by his father, Richard. B. Winters and his nephew Trey.

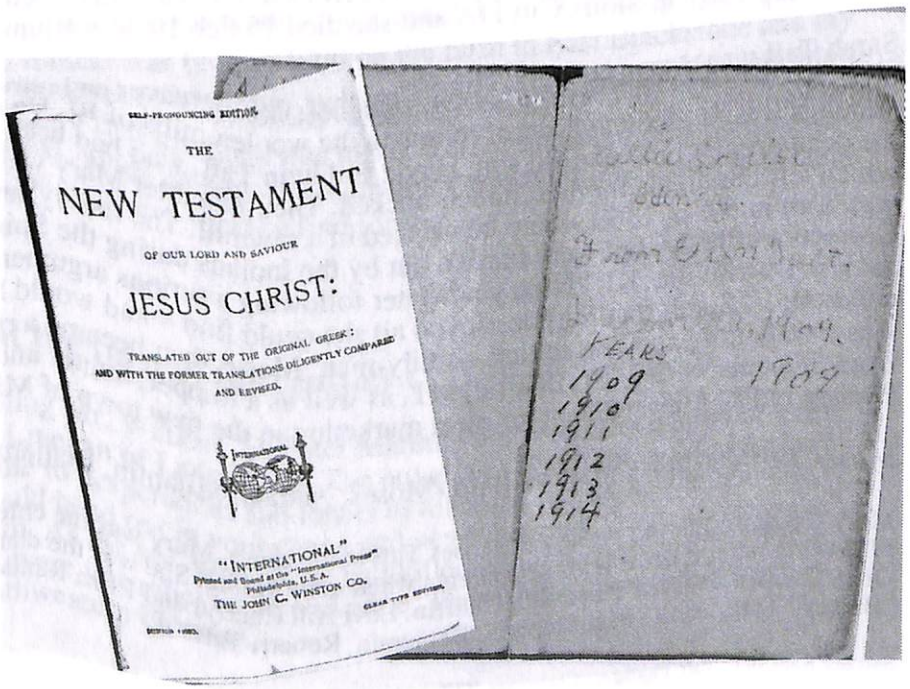
source: Norma Winters, www.sharpfuneralhomes.com

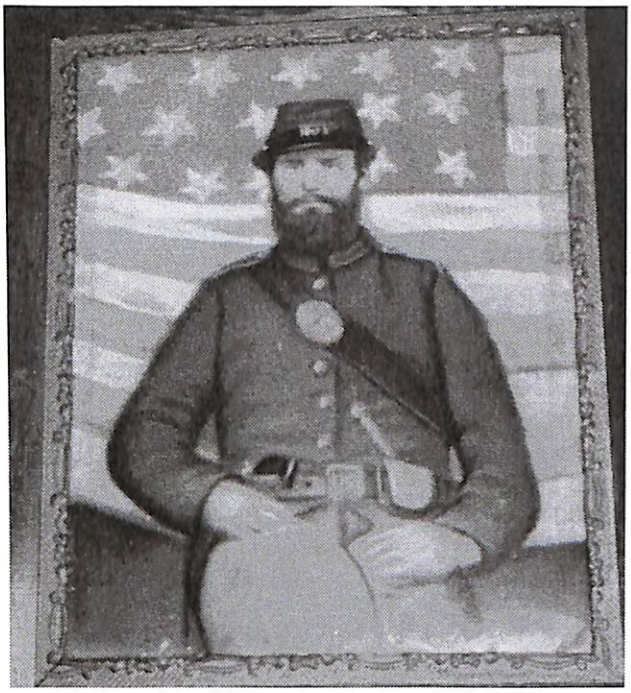
Roy Henry sends another connection between his family and the Tafts

Roy writes:

"My father's only sister, my aunt Nellie L. Henry, and Ellen B. Taft were very close friends during their childhood years. There were two books given to my Aunt Nellie by Ellen Taft during their early years, one is a bible and the other a story book titled 'The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come.'

My father acquired them from his sister's estate after she died. The bible contains the years they went to school together."





Father and Son both served and were wounded in the Civil War

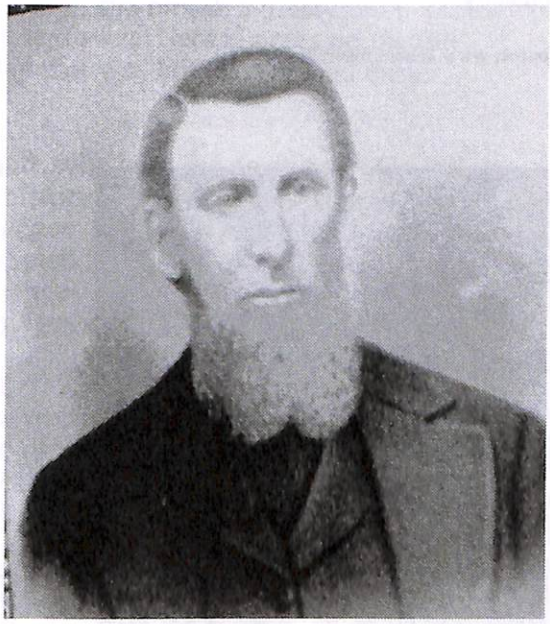
Both Laban Taft and his son Charles H. Taft served in the Civil War and both were injured during the war.

Laban Taft enlisted 20 Jun 1861 from Steuben Co., NY and was mustered out 30 Jun 1863. He was 41 years of age, 5-11" in height with a sandy complexion, light eyes, and red hair. He served as a private in Capt. Henry Baldwin's Co. E, 34th Reg. of NY Volunteers.

Laban was stationed near Philadelphia, PA and then served in the Battle of Antietam on 17 Sep 1862, which halted the Confederate advance on MD. He was wounded in the right ankle by a gunshot and was retired on ¾ disability. After he returned home his ankle was amputated at Dr. Humphrey's office, in Elkland or Osceola, PA.

Laban Taft, farmer, was born 9 Dec 1822 in Addison, NY and died 18 Oct 1874 in Tioga Co., PA. He married (1) Amy Aldrich born say 1823 in Plymouth, NY, daughter of Esek and Sally (Taft) Aldrich. He married (2) Oritta Cunningham, born 28 Apr 1828 in New York, NY, parents unknown, and died 29 Dec 1887 in Tioga Co., PA. He and his second wife were buried in Champlin Cemetery with many other Taft family members. Laban and his second wife had the following children: Charles H., Lavina, Betsey Ann, and Castello W. "Cass" Taft.

Charles H. Taft enlisted 1 Jul 1863, was discharged from the 89th Regt, and joined Capt. S.D. Philip's Co. D, Col. R. C. Cox's 207th Reg. of PA Volunteers. He served in the Army of the Potomac 5 Feb 1865 at Fort Stedman. On 25 Apr 1865 at the Siege of Petersburg, VA, he was wounded on the left side of his face and jaw. Charles was treated at the Field Hospital, then moved to Alexandria, VA and then to the Chestnut Hill Hospital in Philadelphia, PA and was finally discharged on 18 Aug 1865.



Charles H. Taft, farmer, was born 7 Dec 1846 in South Addison, NY and died 25 Aug 1924 (Ctf No 81497) in Westfield, PA of haemoplagia and Bright's Disease. He married (1) 23 Dec 1867 in Knoxville, PA L. Ursula Sperry, born 22 Dec 1854 in PA, daughter of Stephen and Emma (Champlain) Sperry, and died 22 Apr 1875. He married (2) 8 Aug 1876 in Ulysses, PA Susan Betsy Hurlburt, born 5 Apr 1858 in Clymer, PA, daughter of Edwin and Eliza (Clark) Hurlburt, and died 7 Sep 1926 in Wesfield, PA.

Charles H. and his first wife had the following children: Carrie Taft and Arch Taft (grandfather of Eugene Seelye). Charles H. and his second wife had a son Charles Enos Taft (grandfather of Louise Plumley).

Laban Taft was the son of Sabra Aldrich and Jesse (Mijamin, Nathan, Mijamin, Benjamin, Robert) Taft.

Sources: Civil War Pension Index, Civil War Soldier Records, Civil War Draft Reg. Card; PA Death Records, Louise Plumley, Eugene Seelye, TTT, FAG

In Memoriam

It is with a heavy heart indeed that we must report the passing of our very intrepid cousin, Louise Plumley, from Coudersport, PA. Eugene Seelye sent us the following information on the decease of both Louise and her husband Bob within nine days of each other. Twice a year we would receive several pages of notes from Louise chronically the lives of the Tafts of Coudersport. They were not only numerous and long-lived but they were also indefatigable supporters of the Taft mystique – holding their own reunions and keeping us up-to-date on their corner of the country. It just won't be the same without Louise's missives.

Louise E. Plumley

Louise E. Plumley, 87 of Coudersport, PA passed away on Wednesday, 5 Sep 2018 at UPMC Cole Hospital in Coudersport. Louise was born 9 Nov 1930 in Westfield Twp. (near the Jemison), PA, the daughter of the late Walton O. and Bernice T. (Allen) Taft. She dated Robert D. Plumley for four years and they were married on February 2, 1951.

Louise was a member and Past Noble Grand of the Rebekahs, a member of the Cowanesque United Methodist Church, a member of the Ladona Club and Jolly Homemakers Club, which were community focused groups and actively involved in the Jemison Community Building. She taught Sunday School and Vacation Bible School and earned perfect Attendance for five years in a row.

Louise was survived by her husband of 67 years, Robert D. Plumley; her only daughter, Sharon Plumley of Coudersport; her only grandson, Ryan Allen of Coudersport; a brother, Paul Taft of Westfield; two sisters, Phyllis Potter of Westfield and Rose (Mike Steinfelt) Kimble of Little Marsh and many nieces, nephews, cousins, grandnieces and grandnephews. She was preceded in death by her brothers, Lloyd and Sylvia Taft and Milton and Lois Taft; her sister, Janet and Herman Cary, and a niece, Doreen. Burial was in Champlin Cemetery.

(Source: www.kenvonfuneralhome.com)

Robert D. Plumley "Bob"

Robert D. Plumley, 91, of Coudersport, PA passed away on Friday, 14 Sep 2018 at UPMC Cole Memorial Hospital in Coudersport. He was born 28 Oct 1926 in Middlebury Center, PA the son of the late Edwin and Dorothy (Wilbur) Plumley.

Bob served and was honorably discharged as a motor machinist's mate third class in the US Navy during WWII. He worked at Eberle Tanning Company and for Charles Cole Hospital. He was the first maintenance engineer at Charles Cole Hospital, working with the architects and was allowed through the Union to fire the boiler for the first time prior to the hospital opening.

Bob retired from Pure Carbon Company, where he worked in maintenance. He was an avid outdoorsman; enjoyed hunting, fishing, snowmobiling and motorcycling. He could build or make anything.

He was preceded in death by his sisters, Alice and Robert Carpenter and Audrey and Buster Gerow. Burial with Military Honors was in Champlin Cemetery.

Uxbridge and the Tafts by Dale Warren

This article was originally presented in its entirety in the Winter 1962 issue of "The New-England Galaxy" by Gladys Hasty Carroll, Helen Hartness Flanders, Herbert A. Wisbey, Jr, Dale Warren; published by Old Sturbridge Village

"'There it comes'" I can hear my grandmother saying, as all of us, young and old, gathered on the front porch on sultry summer Sunday evenings, along about 1910. 'It' was the Worcester train which would stop at Uxbridge and carry my father to Providence, where he would take the night boat to New York, to return again the next Friday for the same, inverse, ritual. He would wave from the back platform with his immaculate white silk handkerchief, and we would wave back with anything showy and handy.

"He had spent the weekend at "The Farm," once more gloriously known as "Elmshade," tending his colts and calves and piglets, his turkeys and guineas and peacocks. The livestock is long since gone, as is the obtrusive front porch which had mistakenly been "put on," but the trees he planted are still shading the broad intervale, and the house still stands, one of the three stately Taft mansions on South Main Street, Uxbridge, MA.

"There is still the vestige of the old Blackstone Canal connecting Providence and Worcester, adjacent to the railroad tracks, now in sorry competition with the widened, surfaced, and congested residue of a once-impressive stage coach route bordered with lofty elms and hospitable hostelries. And from my early gasless childhood, I can picture a parade of white ducks marching in leisurely single file each night from a bath in the canal, up across the road to welcoming fodder in the old red barns, only recently demolished. The canal, incorporated in 1828, collected its last toll in 1848 and was thenceforth abandoned, having been "more useful to the public than to its owners." There were pony rides and picnics on the hill, expeditions to gather dusty wild grapes for jelly and trolley trips to Lake Nipmuc, surreptitious forays into the larder where curds and whey were secure and abundant. Porter apples to be had for the picking in the orchards, chestnuts ripening before the days of the blight, a musty, commodious, treasure-filled attic, a well with an old oaken bucket, and sweet Seckel pears on the old tree by the door of the south entry. An enchanted childhood in a day that was both harder and easier, but to be recaptured only in memory.

"My grandmother was the wife of the Honorable Henry Gordon Taft, who held the position of County Commissioner for Worcester County for the longest period in the history of the office. Although somewhat more closely identified with Worcester than with Providence, the family had many Rhode Island connections. Henry's brother, George Spring Taft, was graduated from Brown University as was his son, another George Spring Taft, a generation later. Henry's youngest daughter, Susan, married Courtney Langdon, who served long as professor of romance languages and endeared himself to generations of Brown students. ...

"The family's city excursions were about equally divided between Providence and Worcester, where the shops held similar attractions. If Providence could offer a whiff of the sea and an imposing State House, Worcester held the newly-formed Worcester Club as well as the social attractions of Tatnuck. It was always a red letter day when we went up, always by train, to see my uncle, the second George Spring Taft, make an impressive appearance in the courtroom. This he did with force, enthusiasm, and regularity as District Attorney of Worcester County, serving also as a member of the Massachusetts Board of Bar Examiners.

"His grandfather, Bazaleel Taft, Jr., a graduate of Harvard, was likewise a lawyer, who hung his shingle from the diminutive brick building beside the road, within a stone's throw of his own front door. He was twice elected a member of the State Senate and was a representative to the Massachusetts Legislature. Among his special projects and interests was the establishment and maintenance of the State Lunatic Asylum at Worcester.

See Uxbridge and the Tafts cont p 9

In Memoriam

William F Taft "Bill"

Eugene Seelye sent an obituary of William F. (McBride) Taft of Hamburg, NY. He noted he had no idea where William fit into the family line. Using censuses, findagrave, family trees, and our own databases, we find that William F. Taft was indeed in the Benjamin line of Robert Taft. We do not know much about Bill but have been able to add him to his familyline. Thanks for sending this along, Gene.

William F. (McBride) Taft, age 79, of Hamburg, New York, formerly of Elmira, NY passed away on 23 Sep 2018. Bill was the son of late Frank and Elaine L. Taft. Bill retired from the New York State Department of Corrections in 1991. Bill had a passion for classic cars and had many over the last 20 years.

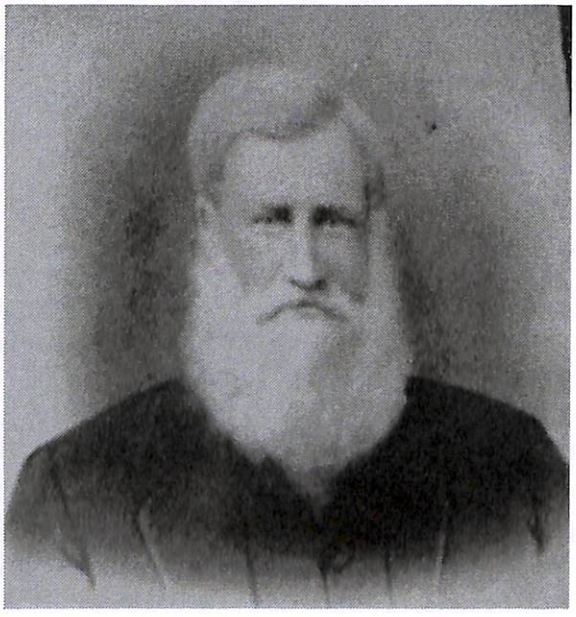
He is survived by his loving and devoted wife Linda, married 58 years, a love story that started when Bill was stationed at the US Army Nike Base in Hamburg, NY. Also surviving Bill are his three children, daughter Kathy (Mark) Freese of Rochester, NY and their children Emily and Amanda, son, Mike (Beth) Taft of Elmira, NY and their three children and spouses, Shevonne (Tim), Christina (Paul) and Daniel (Stacey) and daughter Terri (John) Hart of Newton, MA and their children, Hailey and Sean. Bill is also survived by 5 great grandchildren (Jaden, Grace, Savannah, Bailey and Samuel). Bill also was an animal lover who had many dogs over the years and leaves behind his beloved King Cavalier Spaniel, Cindy.

William F. Taft was the son of Elaine L. and Frank A. (George Raymond, Alfred Albion, George Washington, Moses, Nathan, Mijamin, Benjamin, Robert) Taft.

Sources: Legacy.com

Charles Enos Taft the next in the family line of Tioga, PA

Charles Enos Taft was the son of Charles H. and Susan Betsy (Hurlburt) Taft. He married (1) Mary Rosalyn "Mame" Lattimer, daughter of Alexander "Sandy" Lattimer and Sally Jane King, both pictured below. They had four children; Elma/Alma Elnora, Howard A., Walton Otto (father of Louise Plumley), and Nolan Avery Taft. He married (2) Jennie Adell Stalcup. They had seven children: Gerald Othello "Tib', Vera Irma, Harland Laban "Bill", Onolee Elnore, Ilene Louise, Mary Arlene, and Dale Harry Taft.



Uxbridge and the Tafts cont from p 7

"His father, Bazaleel Taft, Sr., a strong Federalist, was likewise a State Senator and for thirty years a member of the House of Representatives from Uxbridge. It was he who built, on adjoining property, two of the Taft houses still standing. As he was a minor at the time of the death of his father, Josiah Taft, and as the estate paid the largest town tax, his mother, the Widow Taft (Lydia Chapin), was graciously empowered by the citizens to cast the deciding ballot on a question of levy, which was then deadlocked. This she did, and the act made her in 1756 the first legal woman voter in the United States....

"My grandfather got as far as California during the Gold Rush, but never left Uxbridge again, nor missed another Thanksgiving at his hospitable table. In passing, all but four of the forty-five grandchildren were christened with Biblical names, running all the way from Isaac to Rebecca.

"After a brief halt in Braintree in 1678 Robert and Sarah Taft, apparently unfearful of the hostile Nipmucs, moved further inland to Mendon. Although this locality was the original family stronghold, the Taft name has since been more closely identified with the town of Uxbridge, which was set off from Mendon in 1727. A popular family anecdote runs somewhat this way: A stranger accosted a man on the street and said, 'Good morning, Mr. Taft.' When asked how he knew the name, he replied: 'Well I have been in Uxbridge for twenty-four hours, and as the first eleven gentlemen I met were named Taft, I concluded that the twelfth would be named Taft also.' Robert was a farmer, carpenter, and bridge builder, and his sons took after him. Both the first and second bridges constructed over the Black-stone, 'Ye Great River,' a valued source of water power, were the results of their handiwork, and for this service the town of Mendon voted that they 'should be freed from work at the highways.' Three of their five sons became residents of Uxbridge, having been 'bequeathed broad farmlands on either side of the Black-stone.' .... Farming is still to some extent a way of life in and around Uxbridge, although present activity is largely industrial. In the manufacture of textiles Uxbridge has both pioneered and prospered.

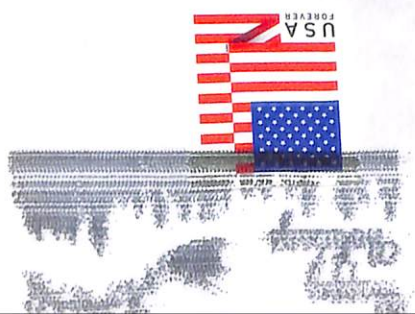
"Uxbridge has been visited by at least two Presidents. In 1789 George Washington actually slept at the Taft Tavern on the Hartford Turnpike. In 1910 President William Howard Taft, visiting Governor Draper at nearby Hopedale, made a special trip to see the George Zadok Taft house, the ancestral farm of his great-great-great-grandfather, Joseph Taft, fourth son of founder Robert. When the President's son, Senator Robert A. Taft of Ohio, died in 1953, the flag on the Uxbridge Common was lowered to half-mast.

"A hot day in August 1874 was a memorable one for 'some 1,200 Tafts,' as it inaugurated in Uxbridge a series of Taft Family Gatherings. If he appeared at that earlier assembly also, the future President was probably in knee pants. At all events his father, Judge Alphonzo Taft of Cincinnati, later cabinet member and minister to Austria and to Russia, had his hands full, as he was chosen 'orator of the occasion.' I have the account of the proceedings which appeared in the Worcester South Compendium, was tightly sealed in a tin case, and reposed for three generations within the trunk of one of the stately trees from which 'Elmshade' derived its name."

Please Note :

It's is time to begin preparing our files for internet access. If you have relevant experience and/or enthusiasm to bring to the project, please let me know. Thanks, Pat at patmarkallen@gmail.com.

Taft Family Association Officers

President: still searching
Vice President & Genealogist: now searching
Secretary/Treasurer: Pat Allen, 124 Meadow Ln, Greenfield, MA 01301; patmarkallen@gmail.com
Newsletter Editor: Pat Allen, 124 Meadow Ln, Greenfield, MA 01301; patmarkallen@gmail.com
Website Editor: David W. Taft, Alpharetta, GA http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~taft/
Executive Committee: Charles F. Davis Jr., Sally Gagne

Annual dues of $8 per family are due and payable each year on or before June.
(Your dues are paid through the year on your mailing label.)